



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 1, 2019

The Honorable Mitzi Johnson
Speaker of the House
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-5301

Dear Speaker Johnson,

I am writing today to respectfully request that you discharge the House conferees on House Bill 39 and appoint three new members to the conference committee.

House Bill 39 is the critical piece of legislation that would allow for many school districts being forced to merge under order by the State Board of Education, the opportunity to extend the merger deadline by one year – from July 1, 2019 to July 1, 2020. And, while it was clear at the start of this process that this was not an issue the leadership in your House Education Committee wanted to address, many more House members, from across the political spectrum, thought it important to do so. As such, a bill emerged favorably from the committee, and ultimately passed the House with overwhelming support on a vote of 134-10, for which I was very grateful, as you know. The bill is now in a Committee of Conference with the Senate.

I have followed closely the work of this conference committee, and have been discouraged by the negotiations on the part of the House. In fact, at the final meeting of the conference committee, prior to the Senate discharging its own conferees, the lead House negotiator indicated his support for a bill that would include a few items regarding Act 46, but would not include the opportunity for a forced merger extension. *"If that were a proposal, we would definitely consider that strongly."* he said.

In my view, that is unacceptable. After all, House Bill 39 was a bill to extend the merger deadline for many school districts, and was the legislative intent of those who voted in favor of it overwhelmingly in the House.

House Bill 39 is an extremely important piece of legislation for my district and for school districts, teachers, parents, students, and communities across the State. The unexpected, forced merger was ordered for us a mere four months ago. It is incomprehensible that we can implement this kind of drastic change well in this compressed time frame. It is absolutely critical that we be given the time necessary to put together a merger well, and ensure our communities are engaged and understand all that is being proposed. House Bill 39 is designed to do just that.

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At this time, however, with just two weeks left in our legislative session, it is clear that there will be no more work on this conference committee if the House does not discharge its current conferees and appoint new ones – specifically, new members who support House Bill 39 and will work to find consensus on this important bill.

I thank you very much for your serious consideration, and hope you find my request favorable.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Heidi E. Scheuermann', followed by a long horizontal line.

Rep. Heidi E. Scheuermann
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cc: The Honorable Kathryn Webb